

To whom it may concern,

My name is Amber Carter and I am the older half sister of Hart Grow. I am writing this letter to verify my little brother's claims about our lives growing up and the home environment we grew up in. Though I do not condone the choices my brother has made to have him be in the situation he is currently in, Hart is at least telling the truth about how it was growing up. I do apologize in advance if I am unable to recall specific ages and dates. I am currently going through therapy to treat my childhood trauma and it makes it difficult for me to recall specifics, aside from the abusive events. A lot of this will be about my personal experiences, since most of the abuse I remember was onto me but I hope it will help clarify what our home life was like since my brother also experienced very similar situations.

Both our parents greatly ignored, downplayed and punished mine and my brother's depression and mental illnesses. I was diagnosed with depression approximately around the age of eleven but both my parents ignored the doctor and told me I was faking and lying to get attention and that child protective services would be called and take me and my brother away because of me lying. When Hart would express to my parents he was depressed or anxious he was told he was being dramatic and "To stop being a little bitch." We were both told that we were lying to our school councilors, doctors and anyone else we told about the abuse at home. We were told that we were making our parents look bad and we would get taken away and be molested and other horrible things in the foster care system. We were often hit and smacked specifically in the face for "lying" about our home life.

August Grow is Hart's father and my step-father and growing up with him was like living with an active volcano. You always knew at any moment he would explode with rage and anger but you'd live in anxiety never knowing just when it would happen. Both my brother and I were subjected to physical, verbal and emotional abuse. August would hit us with both his hands as well as belt and hangers. He would destroy stuff in the house and threatened on several occasions to kill himself if our mother ever called the cops. There are two specific times I remember the police being called on August by Nicole, our mother. The first time my parents were fighting, I think my mom accused August of cheating, and he threw a TV at her and it ended up missing her and going through the wall. My brother and I were told by our mom, after she called, that if the police asked us anything to lie and say nothing happened and to lie about the hole in the wall. The other time my parents were again fighting and my mother pulled a gun on August, though I don't remember why. I remember leaving the house with my mom and brother but we came back and I don't remember how but the police never arrested our dad or anything.

When we moved into our house on Highland ave I believe I was in middle school and I lived there through high school. I remember in 8th grade August hit me so hard in the face that my jaw dislocated and was never correctly fixed by a doctor, I still have jaw pain to this day as a result. I specifically remember I was either sixteen or seventeen and our mother decided she was going to have an affair and purposely rubbed it in August's face up to the day she was to get on a greyhound bus to Arkansas to meet up with this person. The night she was to leave her and August got into a really bad fight and I got mixed in because I was suffering from insomnia due to my depression and when I said I wasn't going to go to bed August grabbed me and dragged me down the hallway to my room leaving bruises on my arms from gripping me so hard. He literally threw me onto my hard, painted cement floor where I hit my chin hard. My step father then demanded my cell phone for being disrespectful and while I tried to shut off my phone I saw August grab for me and I raised my arms up to block my face. Next thing I knew he was on top of me hitting me in the face and I blacked out. When I came to my mom was pulling him off me. She called him a monster and then left my brother and I with August to catch her bus. August left us home alone to chase after her and I could hear my brother crying in the room next to me. Hart was

about eleven or twelve at the time, I told him it was okay and that I was gonna call grandma and have her come get him and that I would be okay. I ended up staying with a friend for the week that our mother was gone and I had bruises all over me including my face, a black eye and my chin injury. Neither Hart or I asked for child services or authorities to be involved since our whole lives we were taught not to. When our mother returned Hart and I confronted her about leaving us like that and she told us "I needed to do what I needed to do for me and you just need to get over it, you're not that important." Hart was always closer with our mother and I think this situation really affected how he viewed her and August. I apologize for the long recollections; I just want to accurately portray the type of people our parents were. Although I mention our dad a lot our mother was no saint. Though she didn't hit us as much as our dad, she would smack us in the face quiet a lot for the smallest of things, her abuse was mainly verbal and emotional. Our mother has a sharp mind and an even sharper tongue. She easily tore through mine and my brothers self worth and broke us down until we felt like we were nothing and stupid compared to her.

Hart had always been a bit distant from the family since about the age of seven and back then as a child I honestly didn't know what caused it. In school my brother was teased a lot and bullied, especially once he got his growth spurt. Specifically I remember at Cottonbull Hart was mercilessly teased and attacked by other kids his age and around his age due to his height, names and everything kids bully other kids about. As we got older I defiantly didn't make things easy for Hart, just as August used me to vent his frustrations physically, I used Hart as a verbal punching bag with misguided anger and sadness. I didn't know until just a couple years ago what happened to my brother as a small child and it makes sense now why my brother became distant and angry with age. With what happened to him with the girl that molested him and the abuse he received at home I can only imagine the inner turmoil Hart was going through. I remember when we found out our cousins were being molested, Hart was around ten through thirteen. Hart was visibly upset and wanted to protect our younger cousins and wanted to hurt the man who had hurt them. Growing up he was very vocal about hating mild molesters and people who hurt kids. I'm saddened my brother became what he had hated so much.

Although what my brother did is unforgivable, I hold hope that one day my brother can wrangle his demons. He has a brilliant mind and I've seen the kind soul he had growing up. Though the man he is today is broken, I hope he can be quelled and the person I knew as my brother will come back. From someone who is a sexual assault survivor is it difficult to say someone like him deserves a second chance, but in the end Hart has the opportunity to change and make choices that will better himself and not hurt others. In no way am I asking for my brother to be spared from punishment for what he did, only that he be given the chance to prove he can change and live some type of life eventually. I thank you for taking the time to read my letter.

Sincerely,  
Amber Carter